

Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park



NATURE'S WATERPARK

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from MSU-WP Garnett Library

The swift waters of the East Fork Black River flow through a canyonlike gorge called a "shut-in" in the 8,670-acre Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park.

These igneous rocks were formed nearly 1.5 billion years ago when violent volcanic eruptions threw ash and hot gases into the air. As these materials settled to the ground and cooled, they formed the rhyolite rock seen at the park today.

About 500 million years ago, shallow inland seas covered the already-ancient and eroded mountains. These seas buried the igneous rock under several thousand feet of sedimentary rock, such as dolomite. Following major uplifts of the entire Ozark region about 250 million years ago, the seas retreated. Rain and wind eroded away great volumes of sedimentary rock as streams carved downward through the soft sedimentary rock layers to the igneous rock below.

For 250 million years, swirling water followed cracks in the igneous rock. Waterborne sand and gravel carved potholes, chutes and spectacular canyonlike gorges. Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park is one of Missouri's most outstanding examples of such features. These canyonlike shut-ins are the principal feature of the 180-acre Johnson's Shut-Ins Natural Area.

The 2.5-mile Shut-Ins Trail loop provides access to the shut-ins. A gentle, one-quarter mile walkway leads to an observation deck overlooking the scenic upper pothole shut-in. Continuing past the lower chute shut-in, this trail becomes more rugged, looping through the East Fork Wild Area.

Outstanding recreational opportunities are available in the 1,110-acre East Fork Wild Area. The 4,874-acre Goggins Mountain Wild Area exhibits the highest wilderness quality of all existing state park wild areas. The major portion of the park's geologic and biologic diversity is protected in these wild areas. Trails through these remote wild areas offer visitors opportunities for hiking, backpacking, equestrian use, bird watching, nature study and photography.

Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park serves as an important trail head for the Taum Sauk Section of the Ozark Trail. This trail leads hikers east to the adjacent Taum Sauk Mountain State Park. The Ozark Trail also leads west, passing through both the East Fork and Goggins Mountain wild areas into the Bell Mountain Wilderness in Mark Twain National Forest. Backpack camping is allowed along the Ozark Trail.

Located in the scenic St. Francois Mountains, Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park retains many wilderness qualities. Out-



DNR photo by Deb Schnack.

The 10-mile Goggins Mountain Trail winds through Goggins Mountain Wild Area and is open to hikers and equestrians.

standing natural features characteristic of these mountains include glades, gravel washes, fens and forests of oak, hickory and shortleaf pine. The 18-acre Dolomite Glade Natural Area is relatively rare in the St. Francois Mountains region. A sensitive, rare area saturated by groundwater seepage makes up the nine-acre Fen Natural Area. Part of the park is included in the 7,028-acre St. Francois Mountains Natural Area. This, the state's largest natural area, has been given this designation in recognition of its outstanding natural and geologic features.

More than 900 species of plants, some rare, have been recorded in Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park. Natural communities can be found in bottomland woods, upland ridges, bluffs and fens. Glades also occur in the wild areas. These rocky openings in the forests support drought-adapted plants and animals commonly found in deserts of the southwestern United States, such as prickly pear cacti and scorpions. The unusual eastern collared lizard, when disturbed, will stand upright and run on its hind legs.

The uniqueness of the shut-ins provides visitors with an equally unique recreation experience as the shut-ins form a natural water playground for swimming. The East Fork Black River offers fishermen the opportunity to hook smallmouth and largemouth bass, bluegill and goggle eye. Picnic sites, playground equipment and an open shelter, which can be reserved in advance, make the park a great place for family gatherings.

Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park offers overnight guests both basic and electric campsites. Camping facilities include modern restrooms, hot showers, a dumping station and coin-operated laundry equipment. The park store carries a variety of necessary supplies and souvenir items.

The day-use area has a maximum parking capacity of 100 vehicles, so plan to arrive early to ensure immediate entrance into the park.

Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park
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